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traits—cruel misrepresentations of not unworthy people—and other trash which too often afflicts the eye in houses where we might look for better things. I am not altogether without hope that a worthy acquaintance of my own will some day displace that object of his fond parental gaze wherein seven gawky children, with wings under their chins, bearing but little resemblance to the inhabitants of this world, and none at all, as I humbly hope, to those of heaven, are perched for ever on solid clouds, to the amazement and horror of all unprejudiced beholders.

We may also confidently predict that the general diffusion of knowledge, which seems likely to go on without check or restraint, will not be limited to what is termed in the utilitarian cant of the day, "useful knowledge;" but that in course of time works of art of the noblest order may be made generally accessible to all classes (at least in large towns), in public libraries, mechanics' institutes, lecture-rooms, and elsewhere. It is not unknown to persons who have had much intercourse with the poor, that many of them evince a real taste for even the higher class of literature, and it is not unreasonable to believe that in like manner many would derive instruction and delight from a literature which addresses itself to the eye. Indeed, it must be borne in mind that a large proportion of all men's knowledge is derived through the medium of that "magic organ, but for whose powerful charm earth were a rude uncolored chaos still," much more, in fact, than studious and bookish men are wont to allow; and we can ill afford to neglect any, even the slightest, and most indirect influence for good, which can be brought to bear upon mankind. I have little sympathy with those who believe that the mechanical triumphs of modern times, and the vast progress of physical science are inconsistent or incompatible with the highest development of the powers of imagination, and that such developments can indeed only have full play in comparatively rude and ignorant times. I believe that Art and Science, each in its own appointed way, and in its own proper sphere, are destined to achieve vast services for mankind; the one in searching out the wondrous laws of nature and in extending man's dominion over the material world; the other in interpreting the mysteries of the visible creation, and in giving utterance to feelings and aspirations which we lack the power to express until some master spirit shapes them into form and color, or fixes them for ever in living words: both of them as powerful auxiliaries of intellectual and moral culture, and as reverent handmaids of Religion, whose service will constitute their highest glory. G. J. W.

It would be a great advantage to some schoolmasters if they would steal two hours a day from their pupils and give their own minds the benefit of the robbery.—*Boyes.*

#### COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF DANTE AND MILTON.

BY MRS. E. VALE SMITH.

##### II.

It has not unfrequently happened, in the history of literary men, that their popular fame has rested upon one out of many works. Sometimes a brief poem, or even a few striking sentences, has immortalized a name which, but for that one happy effort, would have remained involved in the comparative obscurity which covers their contemporaries, and which these fortunate ones have thus eclipsed, occasionally, it would seem, more by accident than purpose. Who thinks of Grey as a professor of modern history, as a compiler of tables of chronology and botany, as the author of certain fine Pindaric odes, or as the poetic eulogist of Milton? Not one out of many thousands; while his "Elegy" is destined to a perpetuity and popularity coextensive with the language in which it was penned. Neither the name, labors, or self-sacrifice of the Rev. Charles Wolfe would probably ever have been heard of, outside of his own parish, had he not one day given to the world a few sympathetic and soul-stirring verses, commemorating the death of Sir John More. What pictures of chivalry of fair ladies and brave knights instantly start into lively remembrance as we hear pronounced the name of Spenser! Yet to his own day, how much more needful was that "Treatise on the State of Ireland," which he wrote, than the "Fairy Queen." That remarkable work on Conic Sections, with all the mathematical and scientific writings of Pascal, are forgotten in the immediate and lasting fame which gathered upon the author of the "Provincial Letters."

And thus it has been, to some extent, with Dante and Milton; of all which they wrote, the "Divina Comedia" and "Paradise Lost" have alone united the suffrages of the learned and unlearned in a common admiration. Yet, unlike some of the instances above referred to, this was no accidental result: Dante, at the close of his "Vita Nuova," declared his intention of thereafter writing a work which should immortalize his love, and Beatrice's virtues: and in many passages of his Comedia the perfect consciousness is avowed that his poem will live for ages, giving fame or infamy to whomsoever he praises or decries in its verses. Six hundred years of an ever-increasing reputation, show that his conscious prophecy was based on something far sounder than vanity. Milton, too, throughout his prose writings, continually gives the plainest hints, nay, does not hesitate to say that he "aims at immortality," as in his letter to Deodati (1637). "Do you ask me what is my thought? So may God prosper me, it is nothing less than immortality. My wings are spreading, and I meditate to fly; but while my Pegasus yet lifts himself on very tender pinions, let me be prudent," etc. And again, in one of his polemical works, he says, addressing the Deity, "he

that now, for haste, snatches up a plain, ungarnished present, may then, perhaps, [when certain other things were accomplished], take up a harp, and sing thee an elaborate song to generations." But before attempting the comparison of these *chef's-d'œuvre* of our authors, let us glance at the preparatory training of mind and life, which enabled them so successfully to fulfill their own hopes.

As we have before noted, Dante, though losing his father at a tender age, received under private instructors, and at the universities of Bologna and Padua, the best education which his age afforded; but so far as external circumstances can ever influence the direction of native and unmistakable genius, it must be admitted, that the early affection which he entertained for Beatrice Portinari, the daughter of a wealthy neighbor, gave that distinct tone and coloring to all of his poetical works, which Boccaccio, Petrarch, and Tasso strove to imitate, but failed to equal. Owing, probably, more to Dante's own backwardness than to any other cause, the object of his admiration appears to have been unconscious of the depth and sincerity of his love; she married another, and died in her youth, before Dante had completed his twenty-fourth year. But, despite her insensibility, her neglect, her positive disdain, her marriage, and her death, the lover continues his worship, writing at frequent intervals, admiring or complaining sonnets to "his lady," and sometimes disguising his real passion by similar addresses (afterwards explained away and repudiated by himself) to others. These, his earliest writings, were collected into a book, which he compiled in his twenty-eighth year, with some other short poems, sonnets, canzoni, and other lyrical effusions, which he called the "Vita Nuova" (New Life). The title of this work brings us at once face to face with the question which Professor Rossetti has raised, in his two works, "Il Comento Analitico della Divina Comedia," and "Lo Spirito Anti-Papale di Dante;" and in which he advances an ingenious theory of interpretation, based upon the supposed discovery of a conventional language or partisan cipher, in use among the Ghibelines, and which he holds to be the only key which can unlock all of the obscure passages in the Comedia; and which, if it exist, may most certainly be also found in the Vita Nuova.

According to Rossetti, the Ghibelines were in the practice of adopting the figurative language of the Apocalypse, when speaking of the pope or the affairs of the church; and, as in the Revelation of St. John, death is vice, and virtue is life, so with the adherents of the emperor—Guelfism is death, and Ghibelinism is life; under the symbol of the divinity of love, he says, they speak of the emperor and of the chief of the Gueuls as Anti-Christ; and thus, in this *gergo* or partisan language, the real meaning of writers was disguised, and could be interpreted truly only by the initiated. By

collecting the terms expressive of opposite qualities, such as love and hate, life and death, and finding their application to the two great political parties and to current events, Professor Rossetti has formed a vocabulary of what he considers to be the anti-papal sectarian language of the times, and particularly unfolding the meaning of the Comedia. There is some strong evidence adduced of the existence of this covert language, and certainly by it many things are rendered intelligible which otherwise seem locked in impenetrable obscurity; but, as we have said, if it exist anywhere, it is certainly to be found in the Vita Nuova; and yet this was written before Dante had avowed himself a Ghibeline, or acted publicly with that party: nor can we resist the impression that Professor Rossetti, with the natural enthusiasm of a discoverer, or rather, first public promulgator, of this secret language, makes it of too much importance, and applies his "open sesame" of the Ghibeline dialect, in many instances, where the obvious literal sense contains all that was meant to be told. Indeed, Dante has himself, in the "Convito," laid down this common sense rule of construction for his own works, "to receive the obvious sense as the true sense wherever the context will admit of it." And as he wrote, in all he did, to *influence mind*, rather than to achieve a partisan fame, he was inclined to use all the plainness that it was safe for him to do.

— For rarely under veil  
Dark words the understanding reach :  
With you, then, shall my speech henceforth be plain.

— *Canzoniere di Dante*, p. 181.

But aside from Professor Rossetti's hypothesis, there was certainly another prevalent conventionalism in Dante's time, and continuing long after, based, though not wholly formed, upon the philosophy of Plato. By this, love was often described as a singular poetical character, compounded of Greek myths, and Christian theology. "Its outline," as Lyell says, might be called "the philosophy of paganism, while its expression and coloring were given by the Catholic worship of the Virgin, and the spirit of chivalry." But in all the love sonnets of the period, it is noticeable that the palm is always awarded to intellectual and virtuous beauty. A peculiar feature of this fashionable philosophy was the belief, that the passion of love was a spiritual regeneration, causing a death to vice and every ignoble sentiment, and a *new life* to all that was virtuous and generous. Lorenzo de Medici adopted this peculiar language in his poetry, and, speaking of love, he says, "that the life of love proceeds from death, for he who loves, first dies to every other thing: if love contains in itself all the perfections, it is impossible to arrive at such perfection without first dying to all that is less perfect. Thus Homer sends Ulysses to the Infernal regions; Virgil, Æneas, and Dante explore hell, to show that this was the road to perfection—it being necessary to die to

a knowledge of the imperfect things we have attained, before we can reach the perfect; before Dante reaches Paradise, Hell is forgotten; and Orpheus would have recovered Eurydice if he had not looked back on hell," *i. e.* on vice.

In this philosophy, beauty and goodness are one—hence love is a desire for virtue. The desire for union with a virtuous mind, and a consequent desire of perpetual possession of the object, associates the desire of immortality. Thus in the *Paradiso*, Beatrice increases in beauty as she and Dante ascend from heaven to heaven, and he increases in intelligential power in the same proportion.

Beside the Ghibeline dialect, and the Platonic philosophy, mingled with the middle-age chivalry, was another cause for mystery and partial obscurity in the writers of Dante's age; and that was the suspicion with which philosophical and scientific pursuits were regarded by the church. The new zeal for the extirpation of heresies which had been kindled by the comparatively recent establishment of the Inquisition in Italy, made it particularly dangerous to write with plainness and boldness on any subject; hence the names of ladies were often used by the Italian writers to express their interest or belief in some particular view of science: and thus Dante, with others, doubtless, often used the names of his lady friends. But his real passion for and admiration of Beatrice is past question, and particularly is this apparent in those canzoni which he wrote about the time of her death, as this, describing its cause:

No icy chill or fever's heat deprived  
Us of her, as in Nature's course,  
But solely her transcendent excellency.  
For the bright beam of her humility  
Passed with such virtue the celestial spheres,  
*It called forth wonder in the Eternal Sire*;  
And then his pleasure was  
To claim a soul so healthful and so pure,  
Deeming this life of weariness and care  
Unworthy of a thing so excellent.

\* \* \* \* \*

The ignoble heart is fraught with sense too low,  
To form imagination faint of her.

And again, in the 24th canzone,

Alas! whene'er I to remembrance call,  
That I must nevermore behold  
The lady for whose love I ceaseless mourn,  
On Death I call, as on a sweet and tranquil sleep,  
And say, O come! with love so true,  
That *I am envious of whoever dies*.

In these and many others, particularly the 33d canzone addressed to Pilgrims passing through Florence, and the 24th on the Anniversary of Beatrice's Death, there is far too much evidence of human passion to allow us to believe that Dante was only eulogizing Philosophy, or revealing to favored partisans his political predilec-

tions. In the above stanza, for instance, could Death mean Guelfism, or anything else than what is ordinarily understood by it? While the fact of his selecting the title of "New Life" for his collection of love sonnets shows that he recognized the prevalent feeling of the most refined minds of the age—in his acknowledged love for the virtuous Beatrice, he had died to all else, and entered upon the *new life* of the pursuit of virtue. In a book which he subsequently published, called the "Convito" or Banquet, and which was a kind of continuation of the *Vita Nuova*, consisting of fourteen canzoni, with elaborate comments upon them, he refers to certain of his sonnets, addressed to the "Compassionate Lady," as in reality an allegory in praise of philosophy. Some of the early commentators on his works made the mistake of applying this explanation to those addressed to Beatrice, which has confused succeeding biographers. But nowhere does Dante himself give any colorable reason for such a supposition. That he was, after Beatrice's death, temporarily drawn toward a lady who deeply compassionated his sorrow, and that his verses to her had, at the time, some touch of gratitude, approaching near to love in them, seems probable—this he partly confesses, and partly attempts to explain away, by calling her Philosophy in the "Convito"; but he never repudiates or apologizes for the most passionate expressions used toward his real love, though, through timidity and nervousness he attempted to cover and disguise it, by complimentary effusions to others.

Nor is it to be doubted that such philosophy and such science as were then extant were explored by him with an ardor exceeded only by that which he felt for his "blessed lady." The evidences of his knowledge on these subjects are freely scattered throughout his poetical as well as prose works. His notes in the "Convito" show an intimate knowledge of whatever could, in his age, be learned from books, and a mind capable of improving and expanding whatever fell under his observation.

But while the far greater portion of these canzoni are to be taken in their first and obvious sense, there are others, like the 68th, which undoubtedly suggest a concealed meaning. It is addressed to a friend, whom he calls Cino, and seems to be regretting the want of political fraternity with those about him.

Since here I find no friend with whom to exchange  
Sweet converse of the Lord whom we obey,  
I now will satisfy my strong desire  
To give expression to my loyal thoughts.  
My long-regretted silence toward you  
Has been occasioned by this single cause,  
The being placed where guilt is so supreme  
That no one offers goodness an abode.  
No lady's looks are here by Love adorned,  
Nor even man is found who sighs for Love;  
And if there was, a fool he would be deemed.  
Alas! Friend Cino, how the times are changed,

To our sad loss! how changed our lovely songs,  
Since goodness is so little in esteem.

*Lyell's Trans.*

This produces a response from Cino in the like strain, and a rejoinder from Dante, who beseeches his friend to continue firm in his allegiance to Love. But this style of discoursing of the passion is very different from that class of his poems in which he really breathes the language of the all-absorbing love by which he ever professed to be influenced, as in this :

My heart more trembles when I think on her,  
In places apt to attract observers' eye,  
For fear my thoughts should glimmer through  
Their veil.

Or this :

He who is a lover and unloved;  
Bears in his heart a grief beyond compare.

Nor can the divinity of Love, as Rossetti thinks, so uniformly be applied to the emperor, else why should so many of these lyrics complain of him as "cruel," remorseless," "consuming," and so forth?

The use of a conventional language and a double meaning, in verse, is not, however, peculiar to Dante, as we have seen his contemporaries and immediate successors indulged in the same; and at different periods conventionalisms of a less agreeable kind, adopted without the sufficient reasons which influenced the Anti-Papal party of Italy in the fourteenth century, have prevailed, affecting and infecting the poetry of entire schools, not only in Italy, but in every country of Europe, where an acquired sentiment has overgrown the fresh impulses of nature, or repudiated the restrictions of pure Art. One of the most common forms of affectation was that of applying classical or fanciful names to characters, which could well have borne their own. Milton freely indulges in this habit, derived in part, perhaps, from his admiration of "Master Spenser," by whom it was likewise adopted. As also in the still more objectionable custom of imbuing scenes and characters, having no such natural affinities, with a pastoral aspect and surroundings, as in his monody of "Lycidas," wherein he likens himself and a learned collegiate friend, to two shepherds, who

— Were nursed upon the self-same hill,  
Fed the same flock, by fountain, shade, and rill,

and goes on in the same strain through all the pastoral imagery of the conventional poetasters, meaning merely to reveal the fact that his friend Edward King and himself were both educated at Cambridge. Despite this tasteless affectation, "Lycidas" is so full of special beauties, of pure and beautiful images, that it will ever have a peculiar charm to the lovers of the poetic, however much they may regret the author's subjection to the pastoral fashion of his day. But this "Lycidas," besides

concealing the real state and character of the deceased under the foolish fiction of a shepherd, contains within itself another latent mysticism, which is probably as seldom recognized as the covert language of the Gheline writer. The annotator Peck says, that "in Lycidas there is an attempt, *though secretly*, to give a poetical image or draught of the mathematical canon of music—drawing a bow-line from rhyme to rhyme, the whole poem is a lesson of music consisting of such a number of bars. The odd dispersion of the rhymes may be compared to the beautiful way of sprinkling the keys of an organ." "He," (meaning Peck) says Dryden, "imagined the rhymes fell so because he could not help it. I think they lie so because Mr. Milton designed it." From this imaginary discovery in Lycidas, by a man of so sound a judgment as Dryden, and so eminent a poet, it is not difficult to see how intentions and meanings, which their authors never meant, may easily be imposed upon writers by commentators and critics.

The sonnets and other lesser poems of Dante were nearly all written in the earlier (we can hardly say happier) portion of his life. He abandoned sonnetizing after he had once made up his mind to devote his great intellectual powers to the production of a poem which should rival, in execution and vitality, the great works of antiquity. The "Convito" was written during the first period of his exile, and appears, with its elaborate erudition, to be the painful attempt of a mind ill at ease, to compel itself to literary occupation, as a resource against the burning and tumultuous thoughts which constantly disturbed the bosom of the exile. But Dante could occasionally be playful: a few verses may be found in the *Vita Nuova*, indicating an aptness for gaiety and mirth; but comparatively so few as to make us feel that the poet was out of tune with his ordinary self when he composed them. For Love was his prevailing theme, and that a love without hope, which must needs be the most sorrowful of all human emotions. Scattered here and there, we find, too, occasionally, cropping out from the graver side of his nature, an unexpected vein of humor, as the following severe lines upon one of his Florentine neighbors exhibits :

He, who the ill-fated wife of him we name  
Becci Forese should distract by coughing,  
Would say, "She must have wintered near the Pole,  
Where frost eternal binds the crystal waves."  
Oppressed with rheums she shivers in mid August;  
Think, then, her sufferings in each cooler month!  
No warmth she finds though sleeping in her hose,  
And wrapt in downy quilt of soft Cortona:  
The cough, the cold, and all the other ills  
Proceed not from the humors chilled by age,  
But from defect of comfort felt at home.

Unlike Dante, Milton's sonnets and lyric songs were written, not at any particular epoch of his life, but as occasion suggested them, through mature and advanced

age as well as in early manhood. They are on more varied subjects than Dante's, though much fewer in number. They express no grand prevailing passion like his, but are mere poetical outbursts of what had elsewhere found no vent. They are either complimentary, as those to Shakspeare, Cromwell, and the Lady Margaret Ley; satirical, as that on the reception of his own book, *Tetrachordon*; merely emotional, like those upon his blindness, or the slaughter of the Piedmontese; or, an attempt at humor, like those on the carrier, Hobson. As a purely imaginative production, *Comus* is, to our mind, the nearest perfect of his lesser poems: the characters immediately claim our interest; our sympathy and admiration are excited for the heroine; the introduction of magic creates a temporary solicitude, which only adds to our pleasure as we find it can be used beneficially as well as hurtfully. The situations are purely poetical; the language overflows with rich and appropriate imagery; the sentiment is sound, and not more exaggerated than may fairly be allowed by the poetic license; and the termination accords with our wishes. When compared with his better known *Il Penseroso* and *L'Allegro*, it proves so superior that it is matter of wonder how the latter have so long taken precedence of it in popular estimation; and we can attribute it only to the fact, that from their greater brevity they have been more universally, certainly not more critically read.

The only play which Milton ever wrote, "Samson Agonistes," he himself tells us, was never intended for the stage. It was just as well that it was not; for the interminable soliloquies and speeches of the hero, could certainly never have been tolerated by any audience, though by their tender touches of nature, and the compassion we feel for his misfortunes, their tediousness is not felt in reading. The first soliloquy consists of one hundred and fourteen lines! and the chorus is indulged in response with sixty. The interest of the tragedy, however, to the student of Milton, rests far more upon the fact of its revealing so much of the author's own experience, opinions, and feelings, than it does upon its intrinsic merits as a work of art. It is strictly constructed upon the Greek model, and therefore includes but few personages; is grave throughout in its character, and admits of none of those by-plays and serio-comic interludes with which Milton's greater predecessor enlivened his tragedies, and made them more akin to nature and reality than the dignity of the Greek school would permit. In Milton's preface to *Samson Agonistes*, he seems to strike a side-thrust at Shakspeare, when he says, "This is mentioned [the names of certain celebrated men who had been tragic authors] to vindicate tragedy from the small esteem it undergoes at this day, happening *through the poet's error* of intermixing comic *stuff* with tragic sadness and gravity, or introducing trivial and vulgar persons, which, by all judicious, hath

been counted absurd, and brought in without discretion, corruptly to gratify the people." Milton did not commit these "indiscretions" of Shakspeare, and the people let *Samson Agonistes* lie on the shelf, except when rendered to them, modified and abridged, by the great musical composer. We shall have occasion to refer to *Samson Agonistes* again, when speaking of Milton's domestic and social character, as also of *Paradise Regained*, which is usually classed with his minor poems.

The only verses of Milton which have any flavor of the "divine passion" in them, are three sonnets which he addressed to a young Italian singer, whom he heard at Florence and other cities in Italy: but, however deeply the fair cantatrice impressed herself for the time upon the heart of the young poet, the feeling was but temporary, Milton's religious principle and self-esteem both combining to keep him from committing his dignity into the keeping of one of the fairest of a class so commonly charged with frailty as hers.

Milton's poems being attainable by every one, we shall not indulge in any extracts here, but turn to inspect another side of his character.

### III.

FROM the congenial pursuit of the muses, our poets were early drawn into the vexed arena of political strife; *Canzoni* and *Sonnets*, *Masques* and *Monodies*, were alike laid aside, in the one case for the arms of the soldier and the duties of the diplomatist, in the other for the championship of revolutionists, and the gall of religious warfare. At the age of twenty-four, Dante was on the field of Campaldino, repulsing from the gates of Florence the enemy that threatened her, with a courage and credit to himself that even his bitterest enemies never attempted to impugn. A little later, he participated in the siege of Arezzo, and was subsequently employed, for the remainder of his career, in his native city, as a frequent negotiator in important foreign treaties, with neighboring and more distant princes; and, out of the fifteen embassies on which he was employed, several were to the court of Rome. What he saw and heard there, the selfishness, the intrigues and chicanery of the Holy See, had probably no little influence in determining his after career, and filling him with that hatred and contempt of Pontifical authority which is everywhere patent, even under the obscurest language of his great work.

But whether we find Dante calling himself, or his enemies stigmatizing him as Guelph or Ghibeline, we know that he always favored the party which was for the time the national party. While connected with the Guelphs, that was the power which favored the ascendancy of the people in their local governments; but when the Pope, the head of the Guelph interest, chose to call in French influence to overawe the Florentines, to which the party, as such, acceded, Dante could no longer act with them.

He strenuously resisted the entrance of the "Pope's pacifier," Charles of Valois, into Florence; and this was one of the real reasons, though not among those officially given, for his condemnation to exile. It was while Dante was on a mission to the Pope, to induce him to recall Charles, that the infamous sentence was promulgated against him. Boniface VIII. had deceived him by false promises, while he was in reality instigating his enemies at home to compass the political ruin of their ambassador. The Guelfs were now no longer acting up to the principles which had hitherto distinguished them. Dante, therefore, cannot properly be said to have deserted his party. His party had deserted its principles, and left his intact.

Tuscany, which had been a free and independent state for nearly a century before Dante entered on active life, had found out by experience the truth of the maxim, "that the price of liberty is eternal vigilance." Assailed on one side by the Pope, assisted by French influence, money, and soldiers (as we have seen repeated in our own times), and, on the other, disturbed by internal factionists, the preservation of real freedom, was no easy task; and in its defence Dante lost property, home, friends, and all that endears to man the place of his nativity. The *local independence of the cities*, especially of his own Florence, the *unity of Italy*, and the *separation of church and state*—these were the principles for which he fought, wrote, and died in exile. It was for the sake of destroying the Pope's temporality that, for a while, he acted with the Ghibelines, but, like the great thinker that he was, he eventually became a "party by himself."

In his treatise on Government, the "De Monarchia," we learn how he reconciled the advocacy of the emperor's supremacy with these principles. Under the system of the universal monarchy of the Roman empire, which he advocates in that work, the cities would have retained their freedom in all local matters, while the various states would have been so linked together as to form a national unit, in a way which he, so many hundred years ago, saw was impossible while the Pope claimed temporal dominion over a part, and was using his ecclesiastical power to overawe the remainder. A Roman emperor (even though a born German prince), was an *ægis* of safety when compared to the seen rapacity of the Church; and though a universal monarchy is now an exploded idea, we must remember that Dante wrote six hundred years ago, and also that the magnificence of the conception has dazzled other great minds far more modern than his. Charles V. and Louis XIV. aimed at no less, and sensible Englishmen did not hesitate to attribute to Napoleon I. a similar intent.

Dante's principal argument for the establishment of the Holy Roman Empire is rather a singular one, and shows how his ingenuity must have been taxed to produce a reason satisfactory to himself—if, indeed, it were

so. It is, "that God recognized its legality by committing to its executive justice the Saviour of the world, who could not truly have been said to have died for the whole world unless condemned to death by the regal representative of it"—a theological argument which the first tilt with modern facts must have inevitably shattered into fragments, had it then found realization in practice. It is quite probable, however, that this train of argument was adopted by the astute Italian, rather with the intent of satisfying the religious scruples of his contemporaries, in regard to depriving the Pope of his temporalities, than that he really could have believed in the validity of a right so derived. We are the more inclined to think so from the fact that we find in it so many other sentiments greatly in advance of his times. Speaking of political theories, he says, "All political speculations ought to have for their object what is likely to advance the civilization of the human race, and to promote the development of the intellectual power of the whole human race ought to be the object of civilization." For an age when the idea of general education was unheard of, this is indeed a step forward. Here, also, we find argued the right of temporal princes to a complete independence in all things secular; free from the interference of the Roman Pontiff; and again, he decries, with a power and bitterness, the influence of which is still felt in Italy, against the *decretales* of the Pope—that body of ecclesiastical laws which had grown, even in his time, to a formidable mass, and which formed a series of canonical precedents and traditions which, he tells us, were held paramount over scripture, and referred to as of binding authority on all Christians. In addition to these anti-papal opinions, we shall see, when we come to speak of the "Comedia," that Dante was also a disbeliever in the power of the Pope to absolve from sin, and that he also condemned the use of excommunication as a weapon of warfare against temporal princes.

It is not strange, therefore, that his book was condemned at Rome, that it was ordered to be burnt by the common executioner, and that this priestly anathema extended to his "memory and mortal remains." At the very commencement of the fourteenth century he advocated almost exactly the same doctrines which the author of the late celebrated pamphlet, "The Pope and the Congress," has done in the nineteenth; and yet we find men, of some literary reputation even, like Leigh Hunt, who can speak of Dante as a "rancorous and bigoted Romanist!"

But Dante's labors in another direction were eminently useful, and scarcely less needed than those in the sphere of politics and statesmanship. The language of Italy, up to his time, consisted of Latin for all official, and nearly all literary services; his own treatise, of which we have just spoken, as well as that to which we are about to refer, "De Vulgare Eloquio," were written in Latin. Italy had no national language, without which

it was scarcely possible for him to hope for national unity. Numerous dialects, chiefly derived from the Latin, served the different provinces with a medium of communication, more or less rustic or refined, in proportion as Naples, Venice, Lombardy, and Tuscany, had advanced in the refinements of general culture. Among the uneducated masses, the *patois* of one district was scarcely understood by the inhabitants of another. To describe, to analyze, to amend, to harmonize whatever was capable of combination in these dialects, so as to produce one national language, was the noble and patriotic, but arduous task accomplished in Dante's erudite and elaborate treatise on the Vulgar Idiom. His impartiality is strongly shown in this work, by the fact that in it he assumes no superiority for his native Tuscan. For this he has been blamed by some critics, who have since revelled in the pages of Boccacio, Petrarch, and Ariosto. But it must be remembered that it was Dante's self who gave to the Tuscan, by its use in his great poem, the supremacy it has ever since maintained. He left it the chief; he did not find it so.

On this subject we find some extremely apposite thoughts in a letter of Milton's addressed to a Florentine friend, Benedetto Buonmattai, who was engaged in a similar work. He says, "Nor do I think it a matter of little moment whether the language of a people be vitiated or refined, whether the popular idiom be erroneous or correct. . . . And I am inclined to believe that when the language in common use in any country becomes irregular and depraved, it is followed by their ruin or degradation.\* On the contrary, we have never heard of any people or state which has not flourished in some degree of prosperity as long as their language has retained its elegance and its purity. Thence, my Benedetto, you may be induced to proceed in executing a work so useful to your country, and may clearly see what an honorable and permanent claim you will have to the approbation and gratitude of your fellow-citizens. . . . There is no one at all conspicuous for genius or for elegance who does not make the Tuscan language his delight, and, indeed, consider it as an essential part of education, particularly if he be only slightly tinctured with the literature of Greece or of Rome. I, who certainly have not merely wetted the tip of my lips in the stream of those languages, but in proportion to my years have swallowed the most copious draughts, can yet sometimes retire with avidity and delight, to feast on Dante, Petrarch, and many others; nor has Athens itself been able to confine me to the transparent wave of its Illissus, nor ancient Rome to the banks of its Tiber, so as to prevent my visiting with delight the streams of the Arno and the hills of Fesolæ." [Dated Florence, Sept. 10, 1638].

Thus we see how Milton would have appreciated the toilsome labors of the great pioneer in Italian philology,

who, whatever his private griefs or public wrongs, never forgot the interests of his country. This treatise on language, as well as the "Convito" and "De Monarchia," was written after his expulsion from Florence. He had commenced the *Comedia*, but laid it aside at intervals, during the twenty years it was in process of completion, for the purpose of writing the above-named works, and upon other exigences incidental to his unsettled life.

Though Milton usually composed with less rapidity than Dante, a long life, a settled habitation, and for many years constant official employment, induced him to give to the world a much greater mass of prose than Dante ever wrote. Added to other artificial facilities, Milton also had the inducement of a ready press, standing prepared to scatter his thoughts through the length and breadth of the land, while poor Dante was obliged to carry his precious manuscripts with him from refuge to refuge, and sometimes to leave them in the care of a friendly monastery, or private hands. For six years of complete leisure at his father's house in Horton, between the ages of twenty-four and thirty, Milton produced in poetry but one sonnet, two short poems, one masque, and part of another. Yet under the pressure of a public need, he could, at the command of the Council, or of the Protector, furnish treatise upon treatise, several of them filled with as grand thoughts, in as noble language, as can be found in any portion of his poetical works.

Those make a great mistake who suppose themselves acquainted with Milton, who are not familiar with his prose works. These present the man in very different and varied aspects, showing not only the massiveness and astuteness of his understanding, but that overflowing intellectual affluence, an idea of which is certainly suggested, but cannot be fully realized, by his poetical writings.

The great mass of Milton's prose writings were political essays, under one form or another. His "Tenure of Kings" was written in a spirit of great indignation against the Presbyterian party, who, having for years incited all the animosity they were capable of producing, against Charles I., contending also against him in arms, —after his execution by the Independents, professed to regard the regicides as highly criminal. Milton shows that if their argument and preaching were sound, the king's death was justified by their own reasoning; while, if they had insincerely taught what they did not believe, they had no right to complain if other people gave them credit for honesty, and carried out their doctrines to their legitimate conclusion. His "Areopagitica" is a plea addressed to Parliament in behalf of the liberty of the press; and though that body was too self-willed and bigoted to be instructed, Milton's reasoning had such an influence upon one of the court licensers, Gilbert Mabbott, that he resigned his office

\* What would he have thought of our American slang?

after reading it. His "Eikonoklastes" (or image-breaker) was also a defence of the Parliament and army against the king. It was provoked by the publication of the "Eikon Basilike" (or King's Image), attributed at the time to Charles I., and purporting to be a record of his sufferings, interspersed with comments and descriptions calculated to excite the sympathy of the people for their deceased monarch, and thus to aid the royal party in recalling his successor. It has since been established that the Eikon Basilike was in reality written by Dr. Gauden, but Milton's reply proceeds upon the supposition that it was the king's own work, deprecating as he does at the very commencement, the idea that he was likely to gain any honor from the mere fact of having a royal antagonist. In this work the king's administration is analyzed step by step, his complaints shown to be without reason, or self-caused; every subterfuge or sophism is exposed, nor was any single act of importance during the whole period of the reign overlooked which could by any possibility dishonor the king or his ministers, or justify the resistance of the people. Following this was his "Defence of the people of England," out of which grew a controversy with Salmasius, a professor in the university of Leyden. It was this noble "Defence" (in two parts) which first gave to Milton his European reputation. He was thought, controversially, to have annihilated his opponent; and such was the esteem in which this production was held, that after its publication all the foreign ministers in London waited upon him, to compliment him upon the completeness with which he had justified the people in the extremity to which they had gone; and though an argument throughout, in favor of the proposition that all power ultimately resides in the people, and that kings are but ministers of the law, and subject to it, yet more than one crowned head is said to have awarded the highest praise to the author. But while abounding in the most splendid passages, Milton in this, as in all of his controversial writings, indulged in a bitterness of vituperation, and an occasional coarseness of epithet, which the readers of his poetry only, would little suspect. He does not hesitate to call Salmasius a "villain," to charge him with "fooleries" in his arguments, and finally to call down upon him the "vengeance of heaven."

But it is in his attacks upon the bishops, in his "Reasons of Church Government," and other essays, that he gives way to a ferocity of expression, and to the enunciation of wishes that disfigure and degrade his otherwise noble style. The "beauties of Milton" can readily be found (a few of them at least) in any cyclopædia of English literature. We shall, therefore, omitting these, venture on the less agreeable task of exhibiting a few of his deformities, which his biographers so determinedly keep out of sight, as if they were afraid that the angry god of the English Parnassus would return from

his two centuries' rest, to annihilate them for their presumption. Johnson only has dared to handle Milton with ungloved hands; but, unfortunately, his constitutional incapacity for understanding such a character as Milton's, and his consequent prejudices, are too apparent to make his courage respected, or his authority available. Dante is usually considered a bitter and gloomy writer —by some has been called "malignant and ferocious." But if the same writers who herein contrast him with Milton, would be at the pains to *know* the latter, they would find ten opportunities to one for condemning the British bard for the same intellectual vice with which they are so ready to charge the Italian.

In speaking of the Episcopal clergy, in his "Reformation in England," he says "and it is still episcopacy that, before all our eyes, worsens and slugs the most learned and seeming religious of our ministers, who, no sooner advanced to it, but, like a seething-pot set to cool, sensibly exhale and reek out the greatest part of that zeal and those gifts which were formerly in them, settling in a skinny congealment and sloth at the top; and if they keep their learning by some potent sway of nature, it is a rare chance, but their devotion most commonly comes to that queasy temper of lukewarmness that *gives a vomit to God himself.*"

We may here remark that Milton was a believer in the Anthropathy of God, and of course, supposing him to possess the actual figure of the human body, conceived it no impiety to attribute such members to the Deity, when speaking of his nature and attributes. This, with other equally singular ideas, can be found in his treatise "De Doctrina Christiana."

If he did not curse others himself, it seems he did not hesitate to demand the curse of God upon them occasionally. Advising the union of the Presbyterians with other dissenters, he says "join your invincible might to do worthy and God-like deeds, and then, he that seeks to break your union, a *cleaving curse be his inheritance to all generations.*" Though an intense hater of Papal authority, and consequently a disdainer of Romish excommunication, he attributes to the dissenting churches an ecclesiastical power of censure, equal in fierceness and presumption to any Vatican thunder. He says, "If a member yield not to admonitions of elders" (and so forth), "in the name of God and of the church they dissolve their fellowship with him, and *holding forth the dreadful sponge of excommunication, pronounce him wiped out of the list of God's inheritance, and in the custody of Satan until he repent.*"

But soon he is back again at the bishops: "but they that by the impairing and diminution of the true faith, the distresses and servitude of their country, aspire to high dignity, rule, and promotion here, after a shameful end in this life (which God grant them), shall be thrown down eternally into the darkest and deepest gulf of hell, where, under the despiteful control, *the trample*

and spurn of all the other damned, that in the anguish of their torture shall have no other ease, than to exercise a raving and bestial tyranny over them as their slaves and negroes; they shall remain in that plight for ever; the basest, the lowermost, the most dejected, the most underfoot vassals of perdition"!!

But enough of this. Those who believe it right to indulge in a "sanctified bitterness," can nowhere find more striking examples than in Milton's polemical writings. Who would believe that the author of the above paragraphs, and the composer of that splendid morning prayer in Eden,—"These are thy glorious works, Parent of Good," was one and the same person, who had not known something of the diabolical temper which religious controversies engender?

But beside political and polemical books, tracts, and pamphlets, Milton wrote a partial History of England, certain treatises upon education, others upon the laws of divorce, an "Apology" for his early life (which, by the way, needed none), and a body of Divinity which we shall have occasion to notice under another head; only remarking here, that the great mass of all which he wrote in prose, was in favor of freedom, and either against kingly prerogative or ecclesiastical tyranny; and that either one of his large works, as the *Eikonoklastes*, the *Areopagitica*, or the *Defence of the People of England*, were of sufficient merit to have given him an enduring fame, had he never written a line of poetry. Nor can we lament, as some have done, that he was diverted from the pursuit of the muses, to mingle in the civil strife of his times. We can never regret that an intellect like his should have been dedicated to the welfare of his country and the cause of true liberty. The excesses of style into which he was sometimes betrayed are, after all, but insignificant blights upon a noble tree, whose roots have struck deeply down into the heart of the nation for whom he wrote, and whose fruit was meant for its healing. The diffusion of his "Defence" amongst the learned of Europe must have been a warning to tyrants everywhere, showing them, as it did, the exact tenure by which they held their seats and privileges.

Thus we have the satisfaction of knowing that both our great poets could sacrifice congenial and pleasing pursuits at the demand of duty and patriotism; and if Milton, in the course of a life so fully employed, should have written some things (as his *Tetrachordon*, and *Idea Theologia*), which it seems his better judgment should have suppressed, these in no way militate against the high place which has been so justly awarded him as a vigorous thinker, an able controversialist, and a splendid rhetorician. To his general style there is but one valid objection: he drew not from the "well of English undefiled," but obscured his almost interminable sentences with involutions, caused by his thoughts and language being thoroughly permeated with Latinisms. In

this respect he corrupted the tongue he has otherwise adorned, and unfortunately has thus repelled many from an acquaintance they would doubtless have formed with his noblest prose works.

(To be continued.)

#### THE MOURNING DOVE.

"*Coo-aye-coo-coo-coo.*" Thou solitary bird! That sittest wailing on the pendent boughs Of the beech forest, thinking sorrow's note Sweeter by far than all the songs of joy That ever poured from ravished warbler's throat! Say! has thy life, like man's, the dull alloy Of fading friendships, and of faithless vows? Of childhood's lisplings lost as soon as heard? Tell me in secret, what did fortune do To make thee wail so?—"Coo-aye-coo-coo-coo."

That is thy answer, and means, no doubt, this, That thou art no more happy than ourselves. To give the *why* would puzzle me and thee; Thou hast a coat for which none toils and weaves, Thou hast for shelter the o'erspreading tree, Thou hast the scattered grain from ripened sheaves Of others' sowing; and we—thankless elves! Have more, a thousand times, the grains of bliss We never sowed—we want them gathered too; We cry "woe's me"—thou, "Coo-aye-coo-coo-coo."

Now I have wronged thee! not for clothes or food, Can bird or mortal sing a song like thine; Love, love, alone, and sorrow—which is love Sunk in the well-spring of the heart—could bring A melody so plaintive; far above, In its low, murmuring grief, the loudest string That ever made the soul of man divine! For such a mourner in this vaulted wood Who would not pass death's gloomy portals thro', If thou wouldst teach his love thy—"Coo-coo-coo?" B.

NATURE produces innumerable objects; to imitate them is the province of genius; to direct these imitations is the property of judgment; to decide on their effects is the business of taste. For Taste, who sits as supreme judge on the productions of Genius, is not satisfied when she merely imitates nature: she must also, says an ingenious French writer, imitate *beautiful* nature. It requires no less judgment to reject than to choose, and genius might imitate what is vulgar, under pretence that it was natural, if taste did not carefully point out those objects which are not proper for imitation.—H. More.

It is a great folly to sadden the present, in looking back upon the past, as though it had been darkened by no shadow of a cloud. The sorrows which nature sends us in infancy resemble spring showers, the traces of which are effaced by a passing breeze. The pains and alarms of each age have been chiefly the work of man. . . . The beautiful age, for a frivolous being, is youth; for the ambitious, maturity; for the recluse, old age; for a reasonable man, every age:—Heaven has reserved peculiar pleasures for each.—Droz.